Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Wednesday, April 13, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NEWS FOR FOOD-SHOPPERS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

--ooOoo--

This is the month when asparagus and strawberries head the fruit and vegetable parade. The price of most fresh vegetables generally goes down this month. Bermuda onions make their first appearance at the market. More new potatoes come on the market. And you can buy the first cantaloupes and cherries of the season. This month supplies of grapefruit and oranges are largest for the year and apple marketings are relatively large. Because the supplies of apples and oranges are large, you can expect bargain prices on these fruits to continue during April.

But to get back to asparagus and strawberries. You may be interested to know that the predictions are for a good deal more asparagus on the market this month. Rainy weather in California, which is the chief early-producing State for asparagus -- rainy weather delayed movement of the crop and caused decay in early shipments. But Georgia and South Carolina, the 2 other early-producing States, have speeded up their marketings of asparagus to fill the gap left by delayed California shipments.

Strawberry shipments are expected to be larger and larger until they reach their peak in early May. Louisiana furnishes most of the strawberries you eat in April and Louisiana expects her crop this year to be much larger than last year's. By the way, you tell quality in strawberries by their general appearance rather than by their size. Size is no sign of flavor for flavor varies with the variety. Fine berries have a bright color, are free from moisture and have the cap attached, and are full solid red. Strawberries without caps should be carefully examined because they may be too ripe. A stained box or basket shows that berries are either overripe or damaged. If you are thrifty, you'll look over the berries at the bottom of the basket.

Meat prices in general will change only slowly during the first half of April, so the predictions are. But you can expect meat prices to continue below their 1937 level. Lamb and pork prices ordinarily go up in April as the supplies become smaller. But this year pork will probably go up less than usual, and little change will occur in lamb. Better-grade beef prices generally decline during April but prices probably will remain close to present levels. Most of the winter and spring decline in better grade cattle prices appears to have occurred from October to January when prices dropped about 50 percent. Recent difference between better and medium-grade beef prices has been small.

Egg prices appear to be near their low point for the year. Some further temporary declines may occur during the spring months, but prices probably will go up until the peak is reached in November. Until the middle of April no material change in egg prices is expected. As for butter, that will probably continue going down in price until June. Production of both butter and eggs has been larger than a year ago. Butter production will probably continue higher than a year ago during the summer and fall, but egg production is expected to drop below its 1937 level in the spring.

Stocks of canned vegetables on the first of March (the last figure I have) were larger than a year ago. And it looks as if this year fewer acres will be planted to vegetables for canning than were planted last year. The 1937 pack of vegetables was the largest on record. Canned corn supplies on the first of March were 3 times as large as a year ago while green pea and tomato stocks were twice as large. I have no report for canned snap beans on March first, but January first holdings were 90 percent above 1937. Compared with March 1937 wholesale prices of standard canned green peas and snap beans were down about a fourth, corn was around a fifth lower, but tomatoes were unchanged.

Old crop potatoes still make up the bulk of potato supplies in spite of larger and larger shipments of new potatoes coming in from Florida and Texas. Most of the remaining old potato stocks probably will be sold this month and new potatoes will be the big source of supply in May. Production of new potatoes is expected to be slightly less than a year ago. During this period of the year old potato prices usually go up as supplies go down, while new potatoes become cheaper.

Here's a last note -- news for your spring salads. Spring lettuce supplies probably will be considerably larger than in 1937 with volume shipments from California expected any day. The early lettuce season in Arizona has passed its peak. If Arizona shipments fall off considerably before the spring lettuce movement gets underway, prices most likely will go up temporarily. Good quality head lettuce is crisp and fairly firm to hard.

****